Leck mich im Arsch

Leck mich im Arsch ('Kiss my arse!', or literally 'Lick me in the arse') is a canon in B-flat major composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, K. 231 (K. 382c), with lyrics in German. It was one of a set of at least six canons probably written in Vienna in 1782.[1] Sung by six voices as a three-part round, it is thought to be a party piece for his friends. The main theme is derived from the final movement of Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 3 in G-Major.

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English translation

The German idiom used as the title of the work is equivalent to the English "Kiss my arse!" or American "Kiss my ass!"[2] A literal, word-for-word translation would be "Lick me in the arse", an example of a calque.

Publication and modern discovery

Mozart died in 1791 and his widow, Constanze Mozart, sent the manuscripts of the canons to publishers Breitkopf & Härtel in 1799 saying that they would need to be adapted for publication. The publisher changed the title and lyrics of this canon to the more acceptable "Laßt froh uns sein" ("Let us be glad!"). Of Mozart's original text, only the first words were documented in the catalogue of his works produced by Breitkopf & Härtel.[3]

A new text version, which may have been the authentic one, came to light in 1991. Handwritten texts to this and several other similar canons were found added to a printed score of the work in an historical printed edition acquired by Harvard University's Music Library. They had evidently been added to the book by a later hand. However, since in six of the pieces these entries matched texts that had, in the meantime, independently come to light in original manuscripts, it was hypothesised that the remaining three may, too, have been original, including texts for K. 231 ("Leck mich im Arsch" itself), and another Mozart work, "Leck mir den Arsch fein recht schön sauber" ("Lick my arse nice and clean", K. 233; K. 382d in the revised numbering).[4] Later research revealed that the latter work was likely composed by Wenzel Trnka.[5][6][7][8]

Lyrics

The text rediscovered in 1991 consists only of the repeated phrases:[9]

Leck mich im A... g'schwindi, g'schwindi!
Leck im A... mich g'schwindi.
Leck mich, leck mich,
g'schwindi
etc. etc. etc.

where "A..." obviously stands for "Arsch"; "g'schwindi" is a dialect word derived from "geschwind", meaning "quickly".

The bowdlerised text of the early printed editions reads:

Laßt uns froh sein!	Let us be glad!
Murren ist vergebens!	Grumbling is in vain!
Knurren, Brummen ist vergebens,	Growling, droning is in vain,
ist das wahre Kreuz des Lebens,	is the true bane of life,
das Brummen ist vergebens,	Droning is in vain,
Knurren, Brummen ist vergebens, vergebens!	Growling, droning is in vain, in vain!
Drum laßt uns froh und fröhlich, froh sein!	Thus let us be cheerful and merry, be glad!

Another semi-bowdlerized adaptation is found in the recordings of *The Complete Mozart* edition by Brilliant Classics:[10][11]

Leck mich im Arsch!	Kiss my arse!
Goethe, Goethe!	Goethe, Goethe!
Götz von Berlichingen! Zweiter Akt;	Götz von Berlichingen! Second act;
Die Szene kennt ihr ja!	You know the scene too well!
Rufen wir nur ganz summarisch:	Let us now shout the summary:
Hier wird Mozart literarisch!	Mozart here gets literary!

This is a clear allusion to the line "... er kann mich im Arsche lecken!" (literally, "he can lick me in the ass" or idiomatically "he can kiss my ass") attributed to the late medieval German knight Götz von Berlichingen, known best as the title hero of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's drama.

This version contains a slight error about the Goethe source: the line occurs in the third act.[12][13]

See also

- "Difficile lectu" – a canon with a disguised Latin version of the same text
- "Bona nox" – "Good night", a multilingual scatological canon
- Mozart and scatology

Notes

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External links

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- *Leck mich im Arsch*: Score (https://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/nma/nma_cont.php?vsep=93&gen=edition&l=1&p1=11) and critical report (https://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/nma/nma_cont.php?vsep=94&l=1&p1=44) (in German) in the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*
- 30-second preview (http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewAlbum?i=121911392&id=121911148&s=143441) on the iTunes store, performed by the Chorus Viennensis and Uwe Christian Harrer

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